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Marcos Gonzalez

Third-Place Winner

Creative Non-fiction Category

2019 Emerging Writers Contest

A Lover's Heart-No, Mind

“Why are you like that?”

My friend and I were on our way to eat. I was driving, and he was criticizing my music for the hundredth time. I listen to what most people would consider depressing music. That's only because of the sad rhythm most of my songs have, but they speak of some of the most beautiful examples of being in love. My friend and I were talking about the various love problems we possessed when all of the sudden he asked:

“Why are you like that?”

See, my friend has never been in love and he has never really been in pursuit of it until now. Being the romantic I am, he asked me how being in love actually is. Of course, I had to do my best to present a beautiful monologue of true love. That's when my friend asked that question. I was taken aback when he asked this. I never really thought about it until then. I have always assumed everyone was like that: thinking of the ultimate love someone will bring them one day. Then I realized that wasn't always the case considering my friend was never committed to any relationship he's been in.

“I don't know,” I responded

Love has always been one of my deepest desires. It's something I would think about during class, fantasies I would conjure up in my head, and definitely the biggest achievement I

could ever have. There was an importance to it I would always see throughout my daily life. Maybe it had something to do with my parents. They had this relationship I would always admire. Yes, they fought but I always understood there would be problems. My parents had these moments when their love for each other seemed perfect. On some day three years ago, my family and my best friend were eating at Olive Garden. When we finished my sister, best friend, and I were eager to get to the car, so we were ahead of my mother and father. We looked back to make sure they were behind us, and when we did we saw them holding hands and laughing with what seemed like the most innocent joy.

“Goals,” my best friend announced.

I smiled knowing my parents still had something special after years of being together. I was happy they had each other, and I saw them as an example of what I would want for my future: a relationship with someone that I can love for decades and never grow tired of. My parents were role models for me. They were great people, and they had something beautiful. I admired what they possessed.

Then, they got divorced.

It was heartbreaking, but admittedly it wasn't surprising. They've attempted to separate from each other years prior to their actual divorce. But after seeing the state my sister and I were in following the news, they decided to work out their problems. Unfortunately, it didn't last very long. I couldn't be mad at my parents. I knew they did their best to fix whatever issues they had: if I was mad at all then it was towards the truth behind true love. Love is hard to find. I could be with someone for years only to find out she wasn't the one for me. My parents' relationship gave me the hope I needed to find the girl I'll spend the rest of my life with. Now that it was gone, I didn't know if the romantic in me could remain so optimistic.

Accustoming myself to live in a home without a father wasn't difficult. My dad was a caring man, so he always did his best to keep in touch and even spent an afternoon every weekend with me and my sister. My mother was happy knowing my father would always be around: they've always loved each other and always will. What was hard to deal with was this new perspective of love that had surfaced after the divorce. Would I ever find the one?

I had my first girlfriend a few months after the divorce. I was sixteen and had no idea what to expect: I didn't know how to be a boyfriend and my feelings toward commitment were all over the place. When I told my mother of my relationship, she gave me a piece of advice that helped me settle my thoughts:

"Don't fall in love. Get to know the girl and don't rush things. Have a good time but remember to find out what you like in a girl to better know what type of woman you'll marry. And again, don't fall in love!"

My mother was very clear on the whole "don't fall in love" part. At that age, I was very compliant, so I obeyed her even though I knew I couldn't suppress any feelings of love I might have.

My first relationship was nice. We would text each other throughout the school day. I would walk her to class and be late to my own. We would spend lunch together alone in the library. I really liked the girl. She brought out the romantic in me. There was this Thursday afternoon we spent in the library. She was working on an assignment while listening in on my apology (I offended her by saying a dirty joke I found extremely funny). Anyways, she gave me the chance to redeem myself that afternoon. My apology didn't seem to be working because she left the computer she was working on without a word.

I didn't know what to do. We've never gotten in a fight before. But as she left the library, I realized the library was hosting Café Libre: an event for students to perform songs or poetry. I saw the stage was already set up and asked one of the librarians if it would be ok if I performed. Mr. Nelson enthusiastically gave me permission to do so and even prepared everything for me.

I waited for my girlfriend outside the library's doors. I was nervous like never before: I had never performed in front of an audience and never in the hope to win a girl back. I saw her turn from the adjacent hallway and make her way towards me.

"What?" She questioned the huge smile across my face.

"I'm about to do something stupid," I explained and rushed inside the library onto the stage.

I presented myself to the hand full of students in the library. I dedicated the song to a special someone and I sang. During the performance, I saw my girlfriend smiling and blushing and with a look of forgiveness and admiration on her face. It was a beautiful moment. There were others present, but it was only me and my girlfriend in that library.

My first relationship didn't last very long. I didn't fall for the girl, but I got what I needed from the experience. In the little time we had, I saw the beauty that came out of it. I liked a girl so much I was willing to perform in front of an audience of my fellow peers: something I would never have the guts to do on my own. I felt feelings for someone I've never felt before and I loved it. I was in complete admiration of a girl that I had only known for a couple of weeks. And I wasn't in love, I just tasted a sample of what true love can really offer.

I was sad after our breakup, but I kept my eyes on the bigger picture. I have yet to fallen in love with a girl. That's what made everything easier to deal with. If I did and felt so much for

a girl I wasn't in love with, then what would I do for a girl I was in love with? It was an amazing question with endless possibilities. I was hopeful like I was before my parents' divorce.

My mother specifically told me not to fall in love. I understand why she said this: experiencing heartbreak from someone you love is devastating and my mother wanted to protect me from this. But if there's anything I have to do, it's to fall in love with someone. There's a risk in every action, and my mother found out the hard way with the divorce. I have to risk getting my heart broken and embrace the unexpected turns my path takes towards true love. Finding love is hard. It isn't easy, but it's worth everything. I don't know when or where or how I'll meet the woman I'm destined to be with, but I know she's out there. I'll find her because I'm looking for her.